

STEADINESS AND CHARITY;

RECOMMENDED IN A

S E R M O N,

On II. TIMOTHY, i. 13.

PREACHED AT THE

DISSENTING CHAPEL,

ANGEL-STREET, WORCESTER,

NOVEMBER 5, 1792;

AND

PUBLISHED BY PARTICULAR DESIRE.

BY THE REV. GEORGE OSBORN.

Αληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν Ἀγάπῃ.

ST. PAUL.

“ Add Charity, the Soul of all the rest.”

MILTON.

“ Soft Peace she brings where ever she arrives;

“ She builds our Quiet, as she forms our Lives;

“ Lays the rough Paths of peevish Nature ev’n,

“ And opens in each Breast a little Heav’n.”

PRIOR.

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TO THE
SOCIETY OF PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,
ASSEMBLING FOR DIVINE WORSHIP IN
ANGEL-STREET CHAPEL, WORCESTER;
*And to all the Friends of Truth and Love
of every Denomination,*

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,

(As a faithful Outline of his Ministry,)

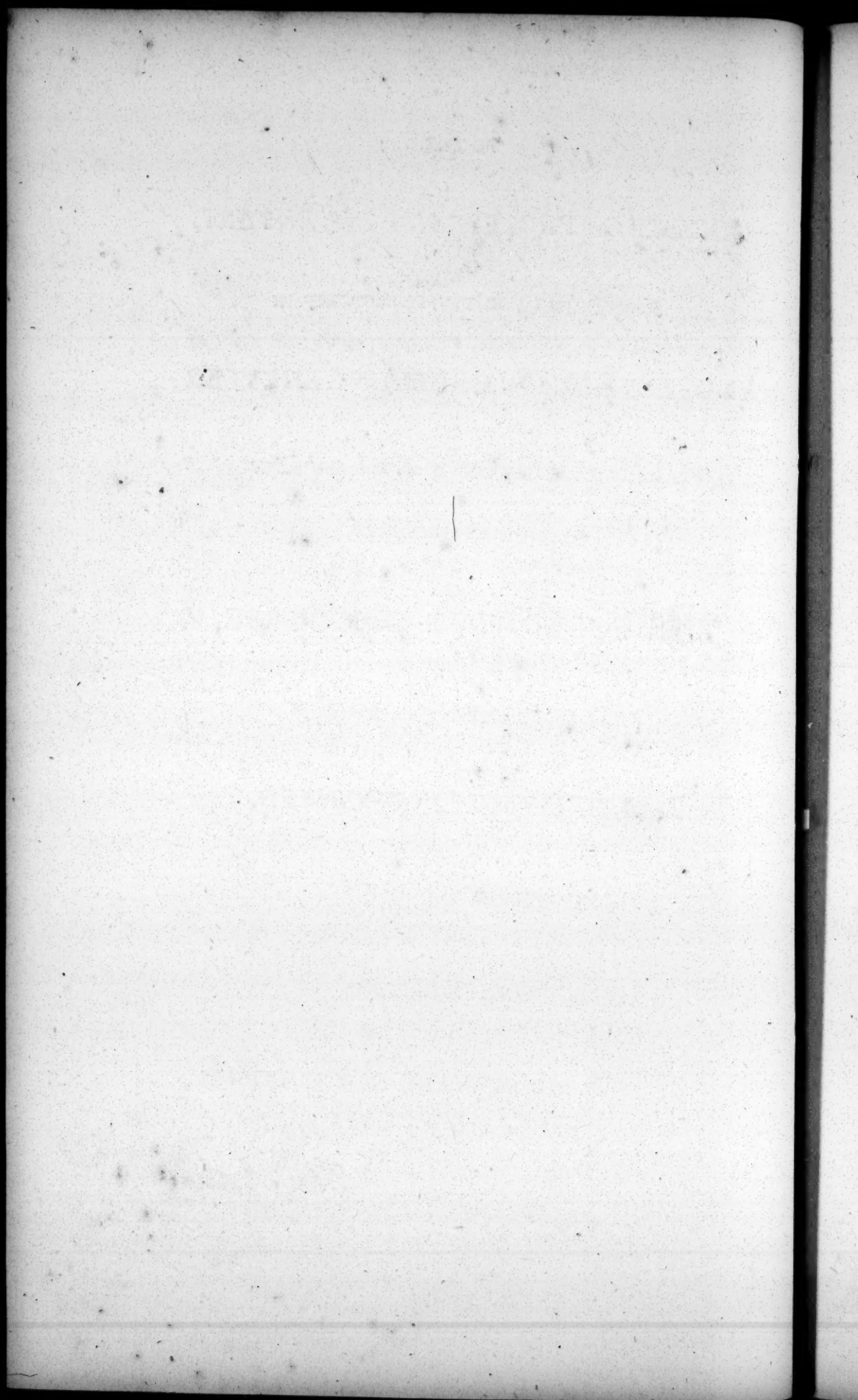
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR

AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

AND SERVANT IN THE GOSPEL,

The Author.



PREFACE.

I AM induced to present the following Sermon to the Public, not merely through the partiality of private friendship, but because it contains, in my sober judgment, the fundamental principles, and urges the distinguishing temper, of the Religion of Jesus:—and because the present times loudly call upon all evangelic Ministers and Professors, at once to assert such sound principles, and to cultivate such an amiable temper.

When politics and parties of every description, run so violently high, as a Minister of the Gospel, I feel it my very serious duty, to claim the attention of my People and my fellow Citizens, to what is infinitely more important than any of the little competitions and jarring interests of the world,—the pure conciliating spirit of Christianity ! And to this
end,

end, I desire earnestly to solicit their regard, not to myself or to my party, but to the matter of our common faith, the sum of all real virtue, and the true ground of mutual peace,—the word and love of God in Christ Jesus.

While many therefore render both the Pulpit and the Press, means of indiscriminate abuse, or vehicles of Error, Infidelity, and most unchristian Animosities;—be it my steady ambition to be found among “the quiet of the land,” who pray and strive, first for the Reformation of our own hearts and lives; and then for the spiritual instruction, the peace and prosperity of Zion, and our Country.

Deeply concerned for general order and happiness, as well as for domestic security and comfort; it seems to me that Unbelief, Impiety, and Strife, are the greatest foes of Britain, and of Man. The favour of the Almighty is connected with Religion and Holiness. When this is lost by any people, fleets and armies are impotent protectors.

If then, amidst the din of war, of tumult, and debate, my feeble voice could be heard, I would
say

both to Churchmen and Dissenters,—“Sirs, ye are brethren: fear God; study to be quiet; and to mind your own business.”—Or lamenting our unhappy differences, and deprecating the afflictive consequences of passion and of sin, I would apply to my contending countrymen, the tender expostulation of the Prince of Latin Poets:—

“Ne, pueri, ne tanta animis affuefcite bella;

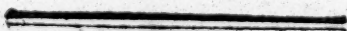
“Neu patriæ validas in viscera vertite vires.”

VIRGIL, *Æn.* vi. 852.

“Embrace again, my sons, be foes no more;

“Nor stain your country with her childrens gore.”

DRYDEN.



PUBLISHED

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

A FUNERAL SERMON for Mr. PARKES,

Preached at West Bromwich.—9d.

AND

A SERMON on the PROPHECIC EVIDENCES

Of CHRISTIANITY, Preached at Birmingham,—Price 6d,

SERMON, &c.

PREACHED Nov. 5.

Christians and Fellow-Protestants,

THE Anniversary of great and important events, especially of signal mercies to ourselves, or to our country, justly demands our observance and improvement. It is equally pious and rational to cherish the remembrance of providential interpositions in our favour: it tends to make us sensible of our privileges, and to promote our gratitude to the great Author of every enjoyment. Such are the views with which I address you at this time. Not to enflame your passions by horrid recitals; nor to aggravate your prejudices against persons and parties, by indiscriminate declamation;

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tion; but, if possible, to excite and confirm your devout regard to the grand interests of evangelic truth and love.—For these purposes I have selected the affectionate admonition of St. Paul:—

II. TIMOTHY, i. 13.

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS, WHICH THOU HAST HEARD OF ME, IN FAITH AND LOVE WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS.

THE tender, yet zealous disposition of the great Apostle, and his particular concern for the comfort and success of his young friend Timothy, are beautifully displayed in both his epistles to him; and I think with great energy in this text. As a Father in the Gospel, he solemnly and repeatedly charges his Son to maintain an inviolable attachment to the doctrine of Christ himself, and faithfully to preach and recommend it to others. Thus *steadfastness* and *charity** are the substance

* Similar to this is that other animated exhortation, I. Cor. xvi. 13. and 14. "Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong: let all things be done with charity."—How abhorrent this from the careless, sceptical, overbearing spirit of modern professors!

stance of all his exhortations, in opposition to licentious sentiments and conduct, as well as to the dark, narrow, and cruel spirit of bigotry and persecution.

It seems, then, essential to the character of Christ's ministers, not only to experience the power of Divine Grace themselves, but to be firm, and yet affectionate, in declaring it to the world.* But we are by no means to restrict the advice in my text to the ministers and preachers of religion. It speaks loudly to all professors of Christianity; and enforces sentiments of the most general—yea, of infinite importance. “*Hold fast the form of sound words:*” This supposes, not merely that the Gospel is true and good, but that on personal and mature consideration, it has been so found and embraced: and then it strongly urges fidelity in our religious professions and

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engage-

* “Are all such teachers? wou'd to Heaven all were!

“I venerate the man, whose heart is warm,

“Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life

“Coincident, exhibit lucid proof

“That he is honest in the sacred cause:—

“The messenger of Grace to guilty men!”

COWPER.

engagements. And the more powerfully to impress this weighty admonition, the Apostle adds his own authority, and an intimation of the only effectual method, how we may at once become happy and useful, viz. by maintaining what he taught, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

In conformity with the Apostle's design, and in particular reference to the laxity and bad temper of the times, I shall endeavour to examine the *ground* of this exhortation,—to illustrate the special *duty* recommended, and shew the proper *manner* of discharging this.

While I am discussing these points, let me remind my hearers of the obligation we are all laid under, by the favour of Divine Providence, carefully to improve the liberty we enjoy, in reading and hearing the word of God for ourselves. May that Spirit which first indited, now apply to all our hearts, “the truth as it is in Jesus!”

I. Let us examine the ground or subject of St. Paul's advice; or consider what it is that Ministers and Christians are to maintain,
viz.

viz. *the form of sound words*.* i. e. Either the lively impression of inspired truth on their own souls, or rather the profession and declaration of evangelic doctrines, in their public services, and intercourse with the world.

Here it is plainly implied that God has given a revelation of his will; that the discourses of Christ and his Apostles contain this revelation; and that this form, or expression of doctrine is sound; *i. e.* true and good; comforting and refreshing to Believers; and most useful and important to mankind.†

Ministers of the Gospel then are not at liberty to preach, as truth, their own fancies. They are not to invent and impose ingenious theories; or sanction their own imaginations with the venerable names of truth and orthodoxy. Neither are they allowed to support
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* *Expressam formam teneto sanorum sermonum, quos à me audisti, cum fide & charitate, quæ est in Christo Jesu.*

BEZA IN LOCO.

† May I be permitted to recommend here, the truly evangelic “Discourses of Dr. Stennet,” and the judicious “Essay on Inspiration;” by Mr. Taylor: tracts peculiarly adapted to instruct and confirm young minds, in the evidences of the Gospel, as well as to inculcate its amiable spirit.

and enforce the traditions of men, fallible and weak as themselves, as if of equal authority with the word of God. Nor should they with violence and penalties urge upon our judgments and consciences, the creeds of councils, or the dogmata of fathers. Neither are they allowed to substitute the systems of philosophers for the word of Christ; or to press the unhallowed politics of the world into the service and propagation of the religion of Jesus.

Such instruments of folly and violence have, alas! too frequently been employed, and the consequences have proved them equally impotent and unrighteous! For we mark in the history of all sects,† among professed Christians, the successive influence of error, of passion, and intolerance, triumphing at times

† “*Hanc veniam petimus que damusque vicissim.*” Nestorius persecuted Cyril; Cyril persecuted Nestorius. The venerable Calvin dishonoured himself and truth by his cruel treatment of Servetus. And even Cranmer obliged the amiable Edward to burn Joan Boucher! So the Independents, fleeing English persecution themselves, in America hanged Baptists, Quakers, and even some of their own members, for Error, Heresy, and Witchcraft!!

“*Pudet hæc opprobria meminisse.*”

times over the simplicity of truth, the rights of conscience, and the bonds of charity. But we are not, therefore, to renounce the Gospel; to charge the corruptions of man upon Divine Revelation; or to think lightly of any thing that God has taught or commanded. By no means; for our text, and many other scriptures, at once assure us of the *soundness*, the substantial nature, and spiritual energy of the words of Christ and his inspired Apostles;—and also call upon us to receive and assert these sound words, whole and entire, as the only infallible rule of faith, worship, and practice; the only certain mean of virtue, of order, and of happiness. And to form a clearer apprehension, of what appears to me as the true grounds of Evangelical Religion, I think we are to hold fast the following particulars.

I. Whatever it has pleased God to declare concerning his own infinite nature and perfections,—as one self-existent glorious and eternal Being, subsisting and revealed in three distinct persons of Father, Son, and Spirit; the great cause, and support, and end of all things in Creation, Providence and Grace;—
and

and therefore supremely to be adored, trusted, and obeyed.—*Vide* 1 *John*, ch. v. ver. 7. *Matt.* ch. xxviii. ver. 19.*

II. We are to admit as sound doctrine, all that the Scriptures assert of the divine character, the saving offices, and the sovereign authority, of the Lord Jesus Christ: believing him as Emanuel, God manifest in the flesh; imbibing his instructions as the pure words of eternal truth; confiding in his atonement and righteous-

* I state these particular doctrines briefly, not having room here to argue them at length; and I refer to a few *old fashioned* texts under each, because I think them full to my purpose, and not at all weakened by modern cavilling. And in support of such peculiarly evangelic texts as those quoted above, I offer three reasons.

I. It seems singular, that the passages which most directly assert the Deity of Christ,—the atonement by his blood, and justification by his righteousness, should be marked above all others as *interpolations—false reasoning—bad grammar—wrong translations, &c.*

II. I can easily conceive, (as a sensible friend has suggested) that in transcribing a manuscript, a word or text might inadvertently be omitted, but not so easily inserted.

III. Modern rationalists, who so freely give up Scripture, substitute nothing better; but rather induce universal scepticism, and blot from the Gospel it's distinguishing glory—it's life-giving words—pardon and peace by a suffering Redeemer.

righteousness for pardon and acceptance; and submitting ourselves to his sacred ordinances and commands. *Vide John i. 14. x. 11. Acts iv. 12. Rom. vi. 23.*

3. The absolute necessity of Regeneration, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is another sound word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This implies, what the Scriptures abundantly teach, that all mankind are by nature and practice apostate, depraved and sinful; and as such that we have neither inclination nor spiritual ability to turn unto God.* So that we are ever to remember, Grace to convert and sanctify, is as much the gift of God, as the pardon of sin and justification, thro' the propitiation

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* The grand peculiarities of the Gospel are, in my apprehension, *reconciliation*, by the Death; and *sanctification*, by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Thus it supplies the very blessings which we have lost by sin, and on which our present and future happiness absolutely depend. Yet these doctrines, humbling indeed to human pride, are the very stone of stumbling, and the rock of offence, to multitudes! But still Christ crucified is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to all that believe.—I refer the reader, with great pleasure, for farther confirmation of these points, to the beautiful little Piece of Dr. Evans; and the two small volumes lately published by the Rev. Mr. De Courcy.

pitiation and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. *Vide Jer. x. 23. John iii. 3.*

4. Intimately connected with this, is that sound doctrine which inculcates universal *obedience* to the commands,—to the instituted ordinances, and to the whole revealed will of God in Christ. We are commanded and obliged to love God supremely,—to love each other sincerely, and to labour after perfect holiness. Without this we are void of spiritual life,—destitute of any good hope,—useless or injurious to the world, and awfully exposed to the displeasure of the Lord Almighty! *Vide John x. 27. Rom. viii. 6. Heb. xii. 14.*

5. It is also a sound doctrine of the New, as well as Old Testament, that there is a day approaching wherein God will finally determine the state of all mankind: “When all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done well, through grace, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.” *Vide John v. 28. and 29. 2 Cor. v. 10. and 11.*

6. And

6. And lastly. I am obliged to add, as a doctrine of truth and soberness, that the Scripture is to be received, without alteration, addition, or diminution, as the word of God, which is able through faith to make us wise unto Salvation.† This blessed book we are to believe and adopt as our only guide in faith, in worship, and in conduct. And in order to this we are to venerate the right of private judgment; to call no man master upon earth; to “search the Scriptures,” and prove all things in religion by this unerring criterion; and to remember that we are personally accountable for the use of these privileges.

Under these general remarks, we may briefly comprehend every thing essential to Christian faith. And I must say, that such *sound words* are in my mind so far from being appendages,

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or

† Whatever improvements have been made in natural knowledge of late, we do not seem to have improved much by our philosophical researches, either respecting the doctrines, or the temper of the Gospel. Indeed, the idea of improving a revealed religion seems to me absurd and fallacious; as this would directly impeach its divine nature and evidence, which must necessarily be perfect and immutable. On this account, as well as for many other reasons, I am inclined to chuse and enforce the *good old way*.

or modern additions to the Revelation of Jesus Christ, that they constitute its very being, and are vital to its spiritual operation and enjoyment. Detach these great articles from the Gospel, and what remains?—An impoverished system, unsuitable to the condition, and inadequate to the wants of sinful man.—Besides, it is important to recollect that these sentiments breathe through the writings of the wisest Fathers;—these were the avowed supports of Martyrs and Confessors;—these were the principles of the Protestant Reformation; and these are still the animating doctrines of the most serious Ministers, the most spiritual Christians, and the most orderly flourishing churches both at home and abroad. “If these foundations be destroyed, what can we do?”

II. I proceed to illustrate the great duty recommended by the Apostles, viz. *Steadiness* in professing and maintaining the Christian Faith:—“*Hold fast the form of sound words.*” This evidently implies that the mind is previously made acquainted with the evidence, the contents, and the importance of the

the Gospel. It supposes that this Gospel is perfect: not improveable by human wit or power; but in every respect full and sufficient: and moreover, that it requires nothing but plain common sense, under divine influence, to enable us to understand it.

It seems farther to be intimated in the text, that these sound words should be opposed in the world; and that both the Preachers, and the Professors of them, would be tempted to corrupt or renounce them. See 2 *Tim.* iii. 14. and 15. St. Paul then advises, not a temporizing spirit,—not licentious accommodations, nor a frigid indifference; but an open, manly, steadfast adherence, and a faithful declaration of the whole “Truth as it is in Jesus.” “The glorious Gospel of the blessed God.”

But what is essential to Christian steadfastness and perseverance?—I answer,

1. *A diligent study*, and heart-felt acquaintance with the word of God. “Let all your studies,” said an excellent speaker to candidates for the ministry;—“let all your studies be turned to divinity; and let all your divinity be taken from the bible:—Nocturne versate manu,

manu, versate diurne." A prejudiced, slothful, or customary profession, even of the noblest truths, will do very little for our own comfort, or the benefit of others. That zeal which is not according to knowledge, is naturally fluctuating, deceptive, and ineffectual. Like the meteors of the night, its brightest gleams serve only to discover darkness, and to lure the unthinking to mistake and danger. But a mind deeply versed in the pure Word of God, and firmly attached to it's glorious principles, will remain unshaken by trial; and diffuse, like an eminence brightened by the sun, rays of light to quicken, direct, and cheer all around.

2. In order to hold fast, we must *personally depend* upon the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the in-wrought conviction of our necessities, and the cordial apprehension of the rich blessings provided in the Gospel, which give an interest and an importance to our sentiments and our profession. The soul that would hold fast, must first embrace, and then rely with strong confidence upon divine truth and faithfulness. It is the feeling

feeling of personal concern, and sincere heart-felt approbation, that will put life and energy into every avowal of our faith,—every act of devotion,—every endeavour for the salvation of mankind. Separate a Christian, if possible, from this dependence;—separate a Minister from this inward experience of Divine Grace; and what insipidity—what deadness—what impotence must appear! Such persons, tho' eminently cultivated as to intellect, and tho' favourably situate for respect and influence, resemble merely the polished labour of a statuary: it can only point with a lifeless finger, but is not able either to ascend itself, or move another one step in the path to Heaven.

3. To be consistent and steadfast in religion, we should *publicly avow* and defend our sentiments. The antient Prophets charge guilt upon their countrymen, because none were found “valiant for the truth upon the earth;” and therefore, it is added, “they proceed from evil to evil, and know not me, saith the Lord.” *Jer. ix. 3.* Our blessed Redeemer also solemnly declares, “Who-soever is ashamed of me and of my words, in
this

this sinful and adulterous generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed." *Mark* viii. 38. So that it is plainly the duty of all Christians, not only to maintain the form of sound words in their own heart and conduct, but openly to profess and assert them in the world. By these means we shall see more and more of the natural darkness and enmity of the human mind respecting God; and of the fruitableness and efficacy of the doctrines of Grace, to enlighten and subdue it. The habit of considering distinct truths, with their connection and evidence, wonderfully tends to personal establishment in faith and holiness: while free and honest communications of our views and hopes, will serve to detect whatever may be delusive,—give encreasing stimulus to our enquiries and exertions, and present fresh proofs of the excellency of Divine Revelation.

4. Above all, we should pay a *practical regard* to whatever we know, and believe, and avow, as the pure good word of Christ. This, indeed, is essential to our sincerity, and consequently to our safety and peace.

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But there is a peculiar blessing connected with conscientious obedience to divine truth and authority, wherever we perceive them clearly leading. It breaks the force of natural prejudice and passion;—it improves the vigour of the mind;—it restrains and conquers the influence of corrupt affections;—it opens up and cultivates the immediate communion of the great “Father of our Spirits;” and engages the direction of unerring wisdom, as well as the supports and comforts of omnipotent grace. Thus our Lord has promised, *John* vii. 17. “If any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.”*

III. I advance now to the main object of this sermon:—viz. *to recommend the manner* in which Ministers, and all Christians, are to maintain the *form of sound words; i. e. in faith and love* which is in Christ Jesus.

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This

* I cannot better illustrate this part of my subject, or do my readers a greater kindness, than by recommending to their serious perusal, the incomparable discourse of my highly esteemed friend, Dr. Williams, upon “The Influence of Religious Practice, on our Enquiries after Truth.”

This may refer either to the mode in which St. Paul instructed Timothy; under the full influence of the faith and love of his great master: or rather, as I understand it, to the temper and conduct which he recommends to Timothy, in his ministration and support of the Gospel. Every servant of Jesus Christ, then must hold fast his truth in Faith and Love:—an admonition equally worthy the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and of the excellent cause in which he was engaged:—but alas! how opposite to the prevailing dispositions of mankind! and how extremely necessary to be generally inculcated in these days of error, and of animosity!

Intolerance and bigotry are of no particular party; they are the sins and disgrace of all parties: and they are equally unfriendly to individual religion, to the peace and well-being of society,* and to the prosperity of the Church.

But

* It seems strange, especially that many truly devout and humble souls, should be chargeable with such malignant and hurtful imperfections of temper; but, as an excellent Preacher once said, "The rankest weeds are often produced in the richest soil:"—and this shews the vast importance of vigilance and cultivation.

But the steadfastness and love which my text urges, are essential to evangelic piety: they are the amiable fruits of a divine influence; and the surest bonds of personal obedience, and of universal order and happiness. Oh! that every private Christian, every Minister, and every separate Church were thus influenced, and thus inclined! Then how far should we be removed from the spirit of calumny, suspicion, and dissension! Then how peaceful, how regular, and how strong would our profession, our efforts for usefulness, and our mutual union be! Surely such a noble end is worthy of our aim; and to attain it let us receive the affectionate exhortation of the Apostle,—“ *Hold fast in faith and love.*”

1. To succeed in this, selfish prejudice, party interest, and worldly ambition, of pleasure or of profit, must be renounced. These are the corruptions which most easily beset us. These are the canker-worms which creep into our hearts, and spoil and wither the fairest productions of knowledge, diligence and zeal. Vain and dangerous is the attempt to reconcile fidelity to Christ with the fashion, gaiety,

and pursuits of the world. Many licentious apostates, — many desolated churches, — many trifling and unprofitable ministers, warn us of those quick-sands; and affectingly teach us to “deny ourselves, and take up the cross.”

2. The honour of Christ, in the spread and power of his word, must be the grand object of our desire and endeavours. Thus directed, we are called to adopt and to assert “the faith once delivered to the Saints:” to “strive together for the faith of the Gospel;” and to pray and labour, “that God in all things might be glorified, thro’ Christ Jesus. Such a noble intention of mind will elevate all our faculties; it will eclipse the transient glories of present things; and by purifying our hearts from earthly defilements, it will strengthen and animate us for more acceptable services, — more extensive usefulness, and more substantial enjoyments.

3. Yet having renounced the world, and intended the honour of the Redeemer, in the assertion of his faith, we are not at liberty to employ violent means; or to think the rage of passion sanctified by the cause in which we
indulge

indulge it:—Far otherwise. The truth of God requires no such wicked aid. The Gospel does not demand the impotence of vindictive folly, or the madness of persecution, to promulge and establish its empire. The pure faith of Jesus revolts from every thing unkind and intolerant; and his insulted spirit abandons those who use the instruments of oppression, cruelty, and wrong.

4. Love, then, pure and undissembled,—supreme love to God, and sincere good-will to men;—the love which is in Christ Jesus;—this is the only weapon of our warfare—the only effectual method by which we can be made permanently happy and useful.—And how mighty is this blessed instrument, in the hand of the divine Spirit, “to pull down the strong holds” of error, superstition, and sin! Mankind naturally revolts from imposition and violence. We have reason which loves to be informed; and we have hearts that love to be addressed. So have our neighbours; and every attempt to injure them, is at once an offence against our common nature, and a certain mean to provoke their resentment, as well

well as to confirm their prejudices and mistakes.

To illustrate this melancholy remark, think of the Crusades—those most unholy wars:—What have the Princes and Generals of Europe accomplished by such blood-stained undertakings? They have rivetted the delusions of infidelity, and shut up every avenue of conviction, among the sensual vassals of Mohomedan tyranny and darkness.—Think again, what have European covetousness and war accomplished among the savage natives of America, the much-injured negro tribes of Guinea, and the more gentle inhabitants of India? They have transferred the hatred of the injured, to the professed religion of their plunderers: and in the mind of a Mexican, a Hindoo, or a poor degraded African, *Christian* is only another term for inhumanity, chicanery, and death.

But let us turn from such unpleasant considerations. Does the Religion of Jesus warrant or encourage such outrages? God forbid:—it breathes a spirit pure, and peaceful, and benign, like its Heavenly Founder:—its very design
is

is to banish hatred, injustice, and cruelty from the earth; and to establish universal good-will, and confidence, and happiness among mankind.

The language of Inspiration in the Gospel is, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: and hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love."—I say, therefore, this is the only appointed way in which we can successfully maintain or impart the knowledge of Salvation. The spirit of love is indeed the spirit of power. This is the universal charm; the surest vehicles of light and truth. This directly tends to impress the heart; to melt down it's most inveterate prejudices, and expand it's finest energies. Under the controul of this heaven-born principle, we shall profess our faith and hope with humble modesty; and always be ready to give a reason for our sentiments, with meekness and fear.—Guided by the love of Christ, we shall learn to discountenance all wrath and bitterness; to relinquish for ever the disgraceful aids of persecution in every form; and to entertain cordial respect for the person, property, reputation, and comfort, even of an enemy to what we deem truth.

And

And if this love dwell in our hearts, instead of relaxing our zeal, or rendering us cold and indifferent in religion, it will stimulate us to exercise every ability, for the suppression of error and licentiousness; and for the advancement of pure and undefiled Christianity. Instead of the ebullitions of anger, love will substitute the still small voice of rational argument: and instead of penalties, imprisonment, fire, riot, and murder, it will introduce on all occasions, the far more powerful agency of patience, of prayer, and of kindness!—O God of Love! look down on a distracted world; pity and pardon the madness of thy creatures; heal our breaches; and bless us with the spirit of union, forbearance, and peace!

IMPROVE-

IMPROVEMENT.

1. WE learn from this subject, what are the genuine characters of the Gospel:—viz. *Truth united with Charity*.—These are marks of its divine original; they are standing evidences of its worth and importance to sinful man; and they claim from every one, to whom it is addressed, serious examination, cordial belief, and practical conformity, both of sentiment and deportment in life:

“ This is the word of Truth and Love,

“ Sent to the nations from above.”

WATTS.

2. We also learn from our subject, what is the character of a true Christian; viz. *Steadiness and Love*, in holding and defending the *Truth*. If our hearts be not thus transformed and impressed, by the doctrine and image of Christ, it is plain that we are still in opposition

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to his sound words, and to his holy will. No pretences to right opinions;—nor boast of benevolence without faith, can possibly avail us. It is the union of sound sentiments, with love to God and to man, that characterizes the disciple of Jesus Christ.

2. Mark, on this occasion, the dangerous and detestable genius of Popery and Persecution. This is that Spirit of Antichrist so often foretold, which has corrupted the pure doctrines of the Gospel; deformed the religion of Jesus; and usurped dominion over the judgment, the conscience, and the lives of mankind. Instead of the form of sound words, inspired and authorized by Jesus Christ, we are presented with a garbled Scripture, in an unknown tongue, and even this restricted to the Clergy. The traditions of Fathers, the decrees of Councils, and the Bulls of tyrannizing Priests, are obtruded for belief and observance, instead of the simple word of Christ and his Apostles. But alas! even these impositions are not the worst features in this monstrous system; for instead of recommending their tenets by reason and love, men have been induced

induced to think they subserve the cause of God, when they betray, plunder, and destroy each other, to uphold and propagate the Church!!

Are we shocked at this description?* Does the wickedness, as well as impotence, of pretended infallibility, launching it's thunderbolts against imaginary heretics, fill our minds with horror? Let us remember all uncharitableness, as well as external violence, towards the opponents of our notions or our party, is of the same pernicious nature, and equally hostile to the mild and holy spirit of Christianity. And let us also remember to distinguish between *men* and *principles*,—rejoicing in every melioration of character and sentiment;—and devoutly desiring that spiritual oppression may utterly cease,—the truth as it is in Jesus prevail universally, and all mankind live and love as becometh brethren.

4. Let me remind my hearers of our unspeakable mercies, in being delivered as a nation from popish error; in being so wonderfully rescued from the repeated efforts of our malicious enemies; and in being permitted to

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enjoyed

* Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur. HOR.

enjoy the word and worship of God, not only under a free toleration, but under legal protection and authority.

When we review the past ages of mental delusion and darkness; and when we contemplate the scenes of intolerance and bloodshed which have passed in our own country; we have abundant reason to say, with the devout Psalmist, "The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; we have indeed a goodly heritage. What shall we render unto God for all his benefits to us?"

But it may be useful, especially to my young hearers, to revive the sense of those peculiar blessings, which this anniversary is intended to commemorate; as well as to notice some other particular events which have contributed to the preservation of our religion, liberties and laws.

The first signal appearance of Divine Providence in our favour, after the Reformation, was the total defeat of what was impiously stiled, "The Invincible Spanish Armada," in the year 1588; when the avowed design of our foreign enemies united, was to subvert
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the British Constitution, and to establish among us civil and religious despotism. To accomplish these cruel purposes the greatest preparations were made, and the greatest forces employed:—but GOD BLEW, AND THEY WERE SCATTERED:—their fleets were destroyed; their power was broken; and England rejoiced in liberty and Protestantism, secured and extended!

The next event which palpably marks the hand of God in favour of this land, was the detection of that infernal plot, formed by the emissaries of tyranny and Rome, to destroy with gunpowder, as on this day (Nov. 5.) 1605, the King, Lords and Commons. But thro' the timely interposition of Providence, the horrid scheme was defeated when just ripe for execution, and the conspirators devoted to infamy, and death.

Without farther occupying your attention on such political themes, (not often treated of in this pulpit,) I must beg leave to remind you of the glorious Revolution, effected by the favour of Heaven, under the great and good King William, 1688: a period dear to the

the remembrance of every loyal subject. For at that time, Popery and arbitrary government were “coming in like a flood.” But it pleased God to “lift up the standard against them:” and Britons had the happiness to see the bible and the sceptre rescued from their enemies, and entrusted to the guardianship of the illustrious House of Hanover. Thus by the Bill of Rights, and the subsequent proceedings, that constitution of order and freedom was recognized and established, which, originating in the will, and regarding the happiness of the people,—yet maintaining the subordination of rank, and the distribution of legislative and executive power, in three estates of King, Nobles and Commons,—has deservedly been the admiration of the world, and the boast and enjoyment of Englishmen.

5. Observe farther from our present subject, how venerable and important is the *right of private judgment*! The Scriptures always address man as a thinking and moral being; and they always teach us, that religion is a personal concern. But in order to retain our nature, or our faith, we must enquire and deter-

determine for ourselves: and therefore we are expressly exhorted to “ prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.” 1 *Thes.* v. 21.

How vain and hurtful any attempt to prevent the exercise of such a privilege—the use of such a talent! And how careful should we all be, not to over rate or misapply our advantages; but with humility, gratitude, and diligence, employ every faculty for the Glory of God, the welfare of our Country, and the Salvation of our own Immortal Souls!

6. Permit me to conclude, by addressing this subject to three different classes of men. To the *unbelieving and erroneous*, let me say, it is not impossible for God to reveal his will to the world; and if he does, such a revelation must be sufficient, true, and good. This we assert concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The evidences, the contents, and the tendency of this Gospel we submit to your examination. If it be spurious, refute it; not by contemptuous ridicule, or sly insinuations; but by open, manly argument. But if you feel it's authenticity, beware how you trifle with it's doctrines; nor dare to impose the conceits of vain philosophy, instead of saving truth.

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To the *persecuting and bigotted* I must say, the greatest enemies of Christianity, are it's weak, intolerant, and angry professors. Be assured, that Religion needs neither human passions nor powers to support it. It flourishes most under the peaceful silent operation of reason and love. Leave then the cause of God to his own vindication; and only labour by purity and benevolence to adorn it yourselves.

And to the *humble devout believer*, I would say, be not afraid to trust your everlasting interests in the hands of Jesus Christ. His word, like himself, is eternal. Study it carefully; and resign your hearts and lives to its influence; and be encouraged to hope, that the clouds of human error and corruption shall quickly pass, and the glorious sun of righteousness shine forth, in one perpetual blissful day of light and love!—Amen.

THE END.



